SECOND

BIENNIAL REPORT

OF THE

MISSISSIPPI INSTITUTION

FOR THE

INSTRUCTION OF THE BLIND.

JACKSON:

PALMER AND PICKETT, STATE PRINTERS.

1852.

REPORT OF TRUSTEES.

To the Honorable Legislature

of the State of Mississippi:

The undersigned, Trustees of Chapin Institute for the Instruction of the Blind, ask leave to submit this report to your Honorable Body.

It is believed that there may be found much to encourage the friends of the Institution, in its history and progress, although a very limited number of pupils have enjoyed its benefits. We are persuaded that it will continue to grow in importance, and its blessings, hereafter, will be more freely dispensed to that class of persons for whose benefit it was established and endowed. The moral and mental culture of those who have been deprived of the sense of sight, demand the kind and liberal consideration of every philanthropist and friend of humanity. The wise and just legislator will perceive the necessity of their being educated, and will, doubtless, contribute his best energies to carry into effect so laudable an undertaking. We waive all argument in behalf of a proposition, which is sanctioned by reason and pleaded for by the loftiest motives.

The accompanying report of the Treasurer of our Board will exhibit the financial condition of the Institute. The funds appropriated at the last session of your Honorable Body, enabled the Trustees to liquidate and settle the debts of the establishment, to add to its comfort and convenience in the purchase of more ground and the erection of the building, and dining apartment, which were deemed necessary and indispensable. The old building required some repairs, which were accordingly made.

The sum annually appropriated for the benefit of the Institute, will probably suffice for the maintenance and education of ten charity scholars. If the number of pupils should increase, of which there can be no doubt, then an additional sum would be necessary to meet the expenditures of the Institution.

We herewith transmit the able report of Mr. Lane, the Principal of the School, which contains much matter of an important and interesting character. This gentleman seems, although blind himself, to be peculiarly suited to instruct and manage his pupils. He is a gentleman of moral and intellectual worth, and we doubt not that his energetic and active powers, will greatly contribute to the permanent prosperity of the Institution.

GEO. FEARN,
THOMAS GREEN, } Trustees.

CHAPIN INSTITUTE, in account with Geo. Fearn, Treasurer.

For amount paid, balance for purchase of house and lot and additional lot,	$962 48
Improvements and repairs	1,229 42
Furniture, books, &c.,	542 45
Salaries for teacher and matron,	1,092 98
Current expenses,	1,670 73
Balance in treasury,	174 49
	$5,672 55

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By Balance in treasury, Jan. 9, '50,	$142 37
By amount of appropriation received from State Treasury,	5,455 82
By am't rec'd, premium on sovereigns,	17 24
By individual donations,	51 00
By amount received for cedar posts sold,	6 12
	$5,672 55
By balance in the treasury,	$174 49

GEO. FEARN, *Treasurer*, &c.

JACKSON, Jan. 10, 1852.

REPORT OF P. LANE,

PRINCIPAL OF THE INSTIUUTE.

To the Board of Trustees—

GENTLEMEN: In conformity to the usage observed in all public establishments, I submit to you this my second biennial report of the past progress and present condition of the affairs of this Institution. During the past two years all its operations have been successfully carried forward; the worthy and noble object which its establishment was designed to accomplish, has been constantly kept in view, and every advance that has been made has been steadily directed towards its attainment. During this period some approach has been made towards the consummation of that great and humane reform, for the achievement of which, this and all similar establishments have been founded and fostered. These two years have been years of struggle and of doubt; nevertheless, something has been done—knowledge has been acquired, the chances of pauperism, so far as the pupils of this Institution are concerned, have been decreased, and the probability of their prospective productiveness and social worth, largely augmented. Uselessness has been transformed into usefulness, and the certainty of future mendicity destroyed by the probability of future self-maintenance; hopelessness has been converted into hopefulness, misery changed into cheerfulness, and imbecility given way to intelligence; gold has flowed out of the treasury of the State, and knowledge into the minds of the blind. The metallic stream, directed in its course by this Institution, has removed, from at least a few souls, the weight of ignorance by which they had been well nigh crushed. Society has expended its money, but the gross material, by this wonderful transmuting agent, has been converted into useful acquirement, exalted moral sentiments, and industrious habits; so that a large premium has already been paid in the shape of skill, intellectual vigor and moral elevation, upon the principal advanced —and we are sure that this premium will go on accumulating until its value vastly overpasses that of the amount originally invested, so that society will ultimately be greatly the gainer by the speculation.

Men may talk of investments in bank and railroads, stocks in canals, turnpikes and ocean steamers, but we are persuaded that no such investments will be more profitable than this; and why

should it? This is an investment in human souls, those noble creations for the enduring well-being of which the Eternal Mind devised and executed a plan of majestic dimensions, harmonious proportions, and infinite benevolence.

The number of pupils now in the Institution is eleven. This number is indeed small—much smaller than we were warranted in anticipating in the commencement of the current session, and much less than it should be in proportion to the entire number of blind persons in the State. To many it may seem a thing strange and unaccountable, that the parents and guardians of the blind should, with such persevering stupidity, and with such culpable ignorance, so pertinaciously neglect to avail themselves of any means for the amelioration of the condition of their unfortunate dependents, and the alleviation of a calamity as enduring as life, and more terrible than death. But when it is remembered that those who have the immediate control of the blind at their homes, are but men, and most generally very ordinary men, and sometimes even less; and when it is further remembered that folly and short-sightedness are the inseparable attributes of humanity, we think the mystery will be at once explained and the problem solved.

The numerical insignificance of our institution, and the apparent indifference of the blind themselves, or of those upon whom they depend, to the peremptory demands of duty and interest, may, we fear, be urged by some as evidence against the utility and practicability of the enterprise in which we are engaged. But a little reflection will serve to show the invalidity of any testimony, and the futility of any argument which rests upon such circumstances as these, or any of the like nature.

In several of the States of this Union, there are free schools established by law, into which all children of specified age can be admitted without money and without price, and without being subjected to any political or theological test. Many of these schools are thoroughly furnished with the necessary apparatus, and provided with competent teachers; the feelings of all parties are respected, and the wounding of long-cherished prejudices scrupulously avoided. And yet, strange to tell, there are in these very States, as will be seen by their respective reports, multitudes of persons who can neither read nor write; there are hundreds, and even thousands of children, who never enter the walls of the school-room, and who, in spite of every effort made by the public in their behalf, refuse to drink of the stream of knowledge, as it flows by them, and grow up a prey to ignorance and all its damning consequences. But because this is so, will any one affirm that common schools effect no good? Will any one assert that no system of public instruction is beneficial, or that universal education is unattainable? Again, the Church has been instituted to afford a retreat for the penitent, that may shield him from the snares and assaults that would peril his safety—to establish a line of separation

between the heaven-seeking, and the godless throng whose way is deathward, and to be the depository of those mysteries, and that knowledge which inspiration has written; but who knows not that the Church, with its divine commission, its numerous priesthood, its bible, and all its mighty apparatus of truth, has effected but comparatively little, and is itself disgraced by hypocrites, and rent by schisms? Christianity has, for these eighteen hundred years and more, plyed the world with rehearsals of duty, examples of purity and lessons of piety; and yet a large mass of human kind is still ignorant of the true God; multitudes are still adherents of an absurd polytheism, and still groping in the filth of a gross sensualism; the iron wheel of oppression is still rolling and crushing thousands at every revolution; the weak are yet bowed down by the strong; human rights and human liberty are still trodden down by the tyrant's heel; the bereaved and the helpless are yet the victims of a merciless and senseless treatment *miscalled* charity; the ignorant are still the dupes and the tools of the crafty and the wicked; fraud, theft, murder, and incest, still curse the earth; the rum-shop, the house of prostitution, the jail, and the gallows, even now stand side by side with the temple of learning and the temple of God; and the sun still rises upon destitution and sets upon degradation. There is in these United States one Christian minister to every eight hundred inhabitants, and, upon a fair computation, we think it would be ascertained that nine out of every ten responsible persons, in each of these divisions of eight hundred, are individuals whose creed is selfishness, and whose practice is wrong-doing! But because all this is so,—because there is yet in the world an immeasurable mass of evil, shall it be affirmed that the Church is nothing worth, and that Christianity is a lie? He who decides that because ignorance and iniquity abound, the School and the Church are inadequate to the accomplishment of good, and the ultimate deliverance of man, acknowledges a principle, the operation of which would produce a ruin no less than the total disintegration of society and the final destruction of the human race.

If, then, the hitherto apparent inefficiency of a wise human system of education, and of a divine system of religion, cannot, with fairness, be urged against their utility and beneficial tendency; neither can the apparent want of success of this institution, with any greater show of fairness, be urged against the utility and practicability of the benevolent scheme for the benefit of the blind, in which this State has so recently embarked.

Whatever doubts, therefore, may be entertained concerning the usefulness or the necessity of such an institution, belong to those who are mere doubters by profession—an unprofitable and disreputable tribe; a class whose belief is disbelief in all that is elevating and ennobling, and who think nothing wise or good, save that that promotes their own petty personal interests, and forwards their

own selfish ends. However true it may be, that the fewness of our pupils proves nothing against the feasibility of the righteous and humane enterprise in which the State has engaged, one thing it does prove, namely—that a sufficiently active and energetic policy has not been pursued. I suggested to the Board the necessity of prompt and decisive action in regard to collecting pupils into the institution. I stated, as fully and clearly as I was able, the difficulties that opposed the growth of such an establishment as this; such, for example, as the ignorance of parents, their unwillingness to be separated from their unfortunate children, their senseless indulgence, their mistaken tenderness and their cruel kindness towards them. To overcome these obstacles, I recommended the course that had been so successfully pursued elsewhere, namely—the making a tour through the State with one or two of the more advanced pupils, and giving public exhibitions of their proficiency, supposing thereby that public ignorance would be enlightened, public prejudice dissipated, public interest awakened, and the obstinacy of parental folly in some measure destroyed. The funds of the Institution were deemed insufficient to carry such suggestion into effect.

The present Matron entered upon the discharge of the duties of her post at the commencement of the present session, and justice requires that I should state that she has performed the functions of her office in a manner highly creditable to herself and entirely satisfactory to others; she has succeeded in conferring upon all the household arrangements a neatness and comfort they never before possessed; the pupils receive from her a judicious and maternal attention, and I must add that the Board, in its selection of her, acted wisely and well.

The health of the pupils has been, on the whole, good; owing, no doubt, mainly, to the wholesome regimen with which they have been provided, and the active bodily exercise they have been required to take. Several of them are persons of feeble constitutions, and hereditarily predisposed to disease, from these circumstances, and perhaps from their own violation of the laws of health. There have occurred a few cases of indisposition, but in every instance, by prompt and skillful attention, a speedy recovery has been brought about. For all the medical assistance that has been required, we are indebted to Dr. S. C. Farrar. To every call that has been made to this gentleman, he has responded with a praiseworthy readiness and a humane alacrity. His services have been purely gratuitous, and in his professional intercourse with the inmates, he has exhibited a tender solicitude and a disinterested benevolence worthy of the highest and sincerest commendation.

In the name of all interested in the Institution, I acknowledge, with becoming gratitude, the receipt of a copy of the Bible for the Blind, presented to the School by Miss Dix, the rival of Howard—the great female apostle of amelioration and benevolent reform, and

the worthy imitator of him of whom it is written "he went about doing good."

I also feel bound to acknowledge a donation of fifty dollars, made to the Institution by the Hon. John I. Guion. May his liberal example be emulated by others.

Since the date of the last report, the pupils have been taught reading, arithmetic, grammar, geography, natural philosophy, philosophy of natural history, elementary algebra, and plain geometry; but above all, and more important than all these, they have been taught a sacred regard for justice and truth—to venerate and practice whatsoever things are pure, lovely, and of good report, and to cultivate a cheerful, self-helping, and independent spirit. In these latter more vital and essential departments of a complete education, they have made a somewhat encouraging progress. They have acquired a self-reliance entirely unmixed with arrogance, and their formerly dormant moral faculties have been aroused into a healthy, vigorous activity. In the just recited more usual studies of the school-room, their advancement has been but slow, and compared to the labor bestowed upon them, disproportionately small. This is owing, first, to the want of the necessary school apparatus, and secondly and mainly to the dullness of the pupils themselves, there being but four out of the entire number for whom mediocrity can with any tolerable show of reason, be claimed—the others being affected, in various degrees, with that sort of imbecility usually characteristic of the born blind.

During the month of February last materials for the manufacture of willow-baskets were purchased, and that trade accordingly introduced as a regular branch of instruction. Since that time four of the pupils have been employed in this department. They have worked two hours and a half per day, for five days in each week. Their progress, it is true, has been but small; sufficient, however, to prove the possession of some mechanical skill, and the ability successfully to exercise it. Some of the baskets have been made in a tolerably workmanlike manner, and commanded a fair price. But little of the work, however, has been sold, for the very good reason that but few salcable articles have been made, and also because the market has all along been over-supplied with this kind of ware. This department has thus far been an expense to the institution, and I see no ground for believing that it will ever be otherwise; nevertheless, it should be maintained, inasmuch as it is the object of the Institution to equip its pupils, at all points, for a successful encounter with the difficulties to be met in the business of self-support; and further, because an institution for the blind without a manual labor department would be sadly incomplete. That it is necessary, or even desirable, to continue the present species of handicraft I do not mean to affirm; but surely it should not be discontinued until a more profitable trade is introduced and one which shall be more available to the pupils as a means of support

in subsequent life. From the best information I have been able to gather, there are sections of the State in which a blind man, by vigorous industry and rigid economy, might earn a subsistence even at willow-basket making Be this, however, as it may, one thing is certain, it will develope their constructive powers, render more accurate their notions of form and proportion, confer upon them readiness in the use of their hands, and dexterity in the management of tools—acquirements which may prove of infinite service in obtaining a knowledge of any more difficult and profitable mechanical art.

In my last report I recommended to the Board that music should be introduced into the School as a regular branch of instruction. There is more talent for music among our pupils than talent of any other description. The best endowed among them, with opportunities however considerable, united with any application of their own, however diligent, and any exertions of others, however wisely directed or faithfully performed, can never, in intellectual attainments, go one single hair's breadth beyond mediocrity; while the others, by the way a majority, can not reach even that. This statement is not made with any intent to disparage, but only because required by truth. Several of these very same persons, by proper instruction, might, and in a few years would, attain to at least a respectable stand as professional musicians. Some of them might occupy the front rank as first-rate musicians.

I proceed to the consideration of the condition and claims of the blind.

From the earliest period of the existence of human society, until the present moment, are to be found, in every section of every country, the sad, but irrefragable evidences, of the moral, intellectual and physical abasement of man. The history of the race is little else than a narration of wrongs perpetrated, and sufferings endured; and every page of the record is stained by the proofs of human guilt, and rendered gloomy by the recital of human woes. But among the multitude of physical ills that have cursed mankind, none hold a more appalling prominence than blindness; and those upon whom it has been inflicted have been in all times the objects of either a hellish and heartless derision or of a senseless and unmeaning pity—a pity alike discreditable to its author and destructive to its object—profitless to each and degrading to both. Blindness and beggary, in popular parlance, have long been considered synonymous, and society has decreed that whoever suffers the one, must endure the other. For five thousand years the blind have been condemned to physical privation and mental destitution. A few among them, in spite of prejudice and opposition, have successfully made their way to independence and even to distinction. Noble spirits, whom the mountains of discouragement, heaped upon them by others, could not crush, and who would not be driven from their purpose by the oft repeated lies that they could not and ought

not to think and act as men. But the condition of the rest has been in the last degree wretched and forlorn. They have been cast out by society, and condemned to pine in solitude, suffering and degradation. To sit by the wayside and ask alms of passers by, have been considered their only and special prerogatives; and exemption from the joys that humanise, the labors that invigorate, and the pursuits that elevate, has been the withering curse entailed upon them by a bad social organization, and which men have cal'ed a benefit and a privilege. By a supposed improvement of modern civilization, they have been collected into alms-houses, those abodes of abomination, and the very hotbeds and nurseries of all that is disgusting and vile—poor in all, save in a rank growth of indolence, ignorance and sin. In these receptacles, their bodies have been clad with coarse raiment, and half-fed with unsavory food, while their souls have been left hungry and naked. It were no difficult task to show that the modern system of pauperism, so far, at least, as the blind are concerned, is no better and, if possible, worse than the ancient system of beggary. The necessities of the mendicant compel him to a certain degree of physical and mental activity—he is driven to grope his way through the streets, or along the road side, in order to meet with those from whom he would crave relief, and his ingenuity is occasionally exercised in devising more plausible and profitable tales of woe. But the resident of the alms-house is doomed to hopeless and perpetual indolence: no incentive to exertion, not even the slightest, is presented to him. Each succeeding day brings the same monotonous round of eating, drinking and gossip. If he labors at all, it is extorted, and labor thus performed, is indolence in its worst form. In those establishments of this kind which make some pretensions to the character of moral schools, he is compelled to listen to prayers about which he knows and cares nothing, and to return thanks for bountiful repasts and multifarious other blessings which he never received; thus requiring him to assume the semblance of a devotion and gratitude, to which he is an utter stranger. Surely the personal freedom of the beggar is better than the confinement of the pauper; and if a mendicant sometimes warps the truth or fabricates a downright falsehood, the crime is far less odious than the hypocrisy which the discipline of what is called a well regulated alms-house requires its inmates to practice. But it is needless to pursue further the disgusting contrast—it is needless to attempt to balance the evils of two such systems; both are full of wrongs—both proclaim the injustice of society; and, the wretchedness of the blind, and the wails of the beggar, and the moans of the pauper, loudly assert the indifference of a selfish world and the desolation of bereaved humanity.

Within the last one hundred years the condition of the blind has been considerably improved. In continental Europe, and in Great Britain, institutions for the training and development of their moral and physical powers have been established, and through their in-

strumentality, the blind have been raised to a more elevated social position than they before occupied, although the place they hold even now is very far below that in which they have an incontestible right to be, and in which they assuredly will be when the voice of justice shall be heeded and her mandates obeyed.

It was not until about twenty years ago that public attention in the United States was directed to the amelioration of the condition of the blind. Since that time institutions for their instruction have been established in several of the States, and through their agency much good has been accomplished. They have demonstrated that the absence of sight does not imply the absence of manhood, and that to be eyeless is not of necessity to be useless. From them, blind men and women have gone forth into the world to engage with the seeing in the fierce strife for bread, shelter and raiment. Some have succeeded, while others have failed—some have been victors in the contest, and others vanquished—some are now occupying positions of profit and honor, and others are still in loneliness and destitution. Although success has not uniformly attended the outgoers from these institutions, yet enough has been done by them to prove that the blind are men, and that when equipped with such powers as a right education can confer, they can perform the deeds of men. Let it not be thought strange that this should be spoken of as having been proved; for there have been multitudes, and even now there are not wanting, persons, who doubt whether the blind are men, and whether they possess the capabilities and the rights of men. I do not affirm that any one ever openly avowed such an opinion, or that he was even aware of entertaining it; but this is, practically, the belief of many, and the creed upon which society has all along acted. The period of the existence of the institutions of this country has been but short, and but little has been done towards the eradication of the immense evil they were designed to destroy. But the experiment may fairly be regarded as having thus far been successfully performed. It is true that as much has not been accomplished as in the beginning was designed and desired; but this only proves that originally too much was intended and expected. It cannot be doubted by those familiar with the facts, that in the management of many of these institutions great and almost fatal mistakes have been made, and the extent of their usefulness thereby greatly restricted. Nevertheless, with all their faults, they are the ornaments of the land, and sources of inestimable good to the blind. However true it may be that public interest in this country has, to a limited extent, been awakened in behalf of the blind, and that some partial provision has been made for the satisfying of their wants, it is no less true that an overwhelming majority of the blind are, at this very moment, and in this very land, in a condition that defies description and almost baffles conception. In the large towns and cities throughout the country they may be found, gathered into alms-

houses, or perambulating the streets as beggars. In the South, and especially in the State of Mississippi, owing to a variety of countervailing causes, this is fortunately not the case. Here the blind are not collected into poor-houses, and are rarely or never to be met with as itinerant mendicants; but even here they are crushed to the dust by an immense weight of unseen misery, and endure a suffering and wretchedness that causes humanity to shudder and philanthropy to weep. Here, most of the blind have homes that may be called comfortable, but each such home is the grave of a soul, the tomb of an immortal spirit, and the sepulchre of powers that, if quickened by the vivifying influence of education, might win for their possessor a name and a place among men, and fit him for a happy entrance into an enduring state of being, where he may forever ascend from one spiritual eminence to a loftier—advance from one excellence to a higher—and where new glories would forever beckon him onward to new felicities. Here the blind are but rarely seen, they but seldom move abroad, and their area of locomotion is usually circumscribed to the premises pertaining to the dwellings in which they reside. The blind child is bound to his home, not, it is true, by the iron chain that binds the felon to his dungeon, but by the stronger and heavier chain of unenlightened parental tenderness, and his limbs are shackled by a fear rendered morbid by the unwise care and injudicious solicitude of others. He is told by all that he cannot see and therefore can do nothing. If he attempt to move alone, dread seizes upon his parents, and visions of fractured limbs, dislocated joints, broken necks, and mangled corpses, pass before their minds in solemn and gloomy procession. Every aspiration after usefulness, every outreaching of the soul towards liberty and independence, and every striving of the spirit to free itself from the oppressive weight with which a cruel kindness has burthened it, is crushed in its incipiency, and at length the unfortunate individual falls beneath the oft repeated blows of an annihilating discouragement, or else he is led, or rather driven, by these seeing blind guides, into the ditch of despair, there to remain till death release the fettered spirit from the mortal clog that so long bound it to wretchedness and woe.

Sometimes the case assumes another phase. The boy breaks loose from the restraints thrown about him and attempts to do something for himself; if he successfully achieve the hazardous adventure of walking a few hundred yards alone, the thing is trumpeted about the neighborhood as a marvellous exploit, and is accounted a deed worthy a conspicuous place in the annals of that particular locality; the visitors at his parents' house are entertained, or annoyed, by rehearsals of his wonderful performances, which never fail, either from false courtesy or genuine stupid amazement, to elicit from the listener exaggerated commendations of the achievements of the boy. Thus his vanity is flattered without his powers being improved, and he grows up vain and helpless, ignorant and

useless. This is an imperfect, but, so far as it goes, a faithful picture of the condition of the blind; and unless the effort now making for its improvement, through the instrumentality of this institution, be liberally and heartily sustained, their condition will ere long be infinitely worse. As the population increases, the number of the blind will augment, poverty will be multiplied, and degenerate into pauperism; alms-houses will be built, and the blind, with others, thrust into them,—there to be fed on the husks of what, by a strange perversion of language, some call charity,—to be clad in the habiliments of wretchedness, to grope in the darkness of intellectual night, and to wallow in the filth of moral pollution.

THE CLAIMS OF THE BLIND.

All that christianity asserts has been so thoroughly established by evidence, so powerful and so clear, that to doubt is but to prove the absurd obstinacy of the doubter, or his incapacity rightly to appreciate testimony the most irrefragable, and demonstration the most lucid.

Christianity reveals to man, that God is his father, that his origin is of no plebeian sort, but that he is the child of a parent, the mightiest and the purest. It declares that all men are brethren, and that there exists among all an absolute equality of right to the possession of the means of happiness. Now, that the blind are men, and that they form a portion of the great brotherhood of humankind, will not be denied by any but the hopelessly insane or the irreclaimably idiotic. As such, then, they have all the rights, and are entitled to all the privileges of men; that is, they may fairly claim all that can be accounted justly due to the seeing.

That education is the right of all will be denied by none, save the sordid minions of an unprincipled despotism, or the craven dependents of an iniquitous aristocracy. The false and damning doctrine that the many were made to be the slaves of the few, and that whatsoever is elevating and ennobling was designed for the exclusive proprietorship of a diminutive minority, is, thank God, rapidly losing ground, and now finds adherents and supporters only among those who account popular virtue a phantasy, and popular intelligence a chimera. Volumes have been written to prove the necessity of education for the masses, and to show that a nation's permanency, and real prosperity, are immediately dependent upon, and directly proportioned to, the intellectual and moral advancement of the individuals composing it; and the experience of all ages confirms the truth of what has been written. There have, indeed, existed vast empires, based upon ignorance and slavery, and supported by physical force, but soon the uncertain foundation yielded and the brute strength failed, and they fell.

It is said, on the warrant of history, by Horace Mann, the ablest and most distinguished of living advocates of popular education, that men had attained to great excellence in oratory and poetry

long before they could construct the mechanical apparatus necessary to put their thoughts in a permanent and discriminative shape, and they understood pretty well the revolutions of the planets before they could make a good cart-wheel. And he finds the solution of the difficulty in the fact, that ignorance performed the manual labor of society. The truth of the observation, and the justness of the solution, are too obvious to need comment; for there is nothing more certain than that an ignorant man may plod on a whole lifetime within reach of a mighty truth, or within a hair's breadth of a valuable discovery, and yet never grasp the one or effect the other.

By the application of knowledge, and skill to material substances, and the facts of nature, has been discovered all that is valuable in art, and all that is noble and majestic in science. Knowledge and skill thus applied have converted the otherwise useless ore into the useful, labor-saving, labor-promoting tool, or transformed it into the implements of husbandry, the instruments of the artificer, the complicated and delicate machinery for the measurement of time, or the no less wonderful machinery by which space and time are almost annihilated.

The trees of the forest have been converted into utensils of domestic use, or re-appear in the ship of symmetrical proportions, traversing oceans, and bearing the produce of one region to the people of another.

The rude contents of the quarry have been fashioned into the temple of learning, the temple of God, and the habitation of man. Fens and bogs have been drained, and have become the sites of large and flourishing cities, teeming with an industrious and thriving population. Uninhabitable pestilential regions have been rendered tenantable and salubrious; sterility and fruitlessness have been changed into fertility and fruitfulness; the "solitary place has indeed been made glad, and the wilderness to blossom as the rose;" intelligence has discovered that the earth is an immense treasure-house of vast powers and rich benefits, that need but its bidding to come forth and strengthen and bless mankind; the history of improvements, discoveries, and inventions in art, shows that the diffusion of knowledge among the masses, is the great source of the material prosperity of the nation; and it has also been found that wherever moral advancement has kept pace with intellectual progress, that happiness is most generally distributed, and the higher wants of humanity more adequately provided for.

Several of the States of this Union have established schools, into which all, without distinction of political or religious creed, are admitted, thereby practically acknowledging the right of all to instruction, and the duty of society to provide the means of exercising that right. The recognition of this right, and the performance of this duty, have now become a constituent element in the policy of these members of the Confederacy; and in some of them, to their honor be it said, there has been at least a partial recogni-

tion of the right to improvement of the mentally and physically infirm.

It is asserted by all competent to decide, that to educate a human being, that is, fully and harmoniously to develope his intellectual, moral and physical nature, is to confer upon him the highest happiness, to give him the mastery over himself, to restore the defaced image of his Maker, and to make him, in fine, in the truest and loftiest sense, a MAN!

Now, if all this be true of education with respect to the seeing, it is, with the necessary limitations and restrictions, also true with respect to the blind; and if it be the duty of the State to provide for the education of the seeing, on the ground that they are men, it is no less its duty to make similar provision for the blind: for their claim rests precisely upon the same basis.

Again, it has been thoroughly established, by investigation the most rigorous, and observation the most accurate, that all physical evil is the result of violations of the physical laws. I know this may sound harshly to those who are accustomed to indulgence in that senseless and wretched cant that calls every calamity of the body a providential affliction. No one yields a heartier assent than I to the general and special providence of God; but belief in this doctrine does not, as can easily be shown, involve the necessity of imputing the authorship of woe to God; and nothing is hazarded in saying that he who charges upon the Almighty all physical evil, is guilty of the perpetration of a most foul and appalling blasphemy. No one pretends to hold the Deity responsible for the immorality that has, for these thousands of years desolated the earth, poisoning human joys, crushing human hopes, and dwarfing, blackening and damning human souls. All moral evil is held to be the result of disobedience to those laws which have been instituted for the government of the soul; and all agree that the guilt of disobedience fairly belongs to man. Now, if it be absurd to alledge that the ills of the soul is attributable to God, the absurdity is surely no less in charging upon him the ills of the body; for the laws that govern each, are equally fixed, and equally well defined.

If the cant alluded to, be applied to instances of moral infirmity, it will stand thus: if a man is lame, blind, sick, deaf or dumb, it is said, "the Lord hath afflicted him"; but, if he is avaricious, dishonest, basely selfish, cruel, or wickedly ambitious, it may as truthfully be affirmed that he is afflicted of God; and yet, if one should talk thus, he would be accounted a fool, or else denounced as a mad and reckless blasphemer.

Whatever the origin of sin may have been, it is certain that its perpetuation belongs to man, and man is therefore responsible for all those multiform ills of the body and the soul that render pleasure disgustful, existence a curse, and happiness well nigh unattainable.

It is certain that if the laws that govern man's physical nature were thoroughly understood, and faithfully observed, that disease and deformity would be banished from the earth, and men would live on, without a pain or an ache, until the corporeal machinery should, by regular and gradual wastings, wear out, and finally cease to perform its functions.

It is also certain that the mass of men are inadequate to the discovery of these laws, and even when known, there are multitudes who have not the moral firmness to obey them. Now, it is admitted by all, that the business of communication, and the imparting of moral steadfastness, that is, education, is the duty of society, and if society neglect to perform this duty, it is clearly responsible for all the infirmity consequent upon such negligence; and blindness being an infirmity, its cause is fairly chargeable upon society.

A few years ago, Horace Mann, the Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, addressed to several of the most eminent teachers in the United States, a circular, proposing these conditions and propounding this query:

If free schools were universally established, and all children were to attend them ten months in each year, for a period of twelve years, and no person employed as teacher who was not at least equal to what are now called first rate teachers, what number of persons would turn out to be irreclaimably bad?

In one or two of the replies to this question it is said that not a single case of irreclaimability would occur. In others, the authors of which were less sanguine, the maximum of hopeless cases is placed at two per cent. The persons who replied to this question, had been engaged in teaching for periods varying from ten to forty years. They had ample opportunity to become acquainted with the subject concerning which their opinions were requested, and were in all points qualified to testify; and their testimony, therefore, will be deemed conclusive. It then appears, that, if the conditions expressed in the circular should be fully complied with, that ignorance and vice would be limited to, at most, two per cent. of the community, and there would, of course, be a corresponding diminution of wretchedness and infirmity. In every hundred there would be ninety-eight virtuous and intelligent persons; persons who would know the right, and possess the willingness to do it. Improper marriages would then not be contracted, and the born blind, or those born to become blind, would cease to be, quacks would not be tolerated, and quackery would cease to work its ruin upon the eyes of men. There might indeed occasionally occur a case of purely accidental blindness, but these instances would be so rare, that the sufferers would always be amply and honorably provided for.

But society has hitherto failed to comply with those conditions,

the observance of which would secure to its members, moral, intellectual, and physical health. It has, by its negligence, deprived many of their sight, thereby taking from them, in a very great degree, the means of subsistance and happiness; and even-handed justice demands that in every case where society has filched from an individual his eyes, that, so far as the thing is possible, restitution should be made. I claim nothing for the blind on the ground of charity, nor am I willing to call anything that may done in their behalf by society, a deed of benevolence. The truth is, that, whatever society can do for them, is but going so far to the reparation of a wrong, and no act of grace at all.

THE OBJECT OF AN INSTITUTION FOR THE BLIND, AND THE EXTENT OF ITS ATTAINABILITY.

The object proposed to be accomplished by an Institution for the Blind, is to fit the sightless for self-maintenance and usefulness. It was once ardently hoped, and, by some, even firmly believed, that after having been educated, the blind could go forth in the world, and compete with others in several intellectual and mechanical pursuits; but experience has proved the hope delusive. and the belief ill-founded. There are, among the blind, a few, who, with such aids as an Institution can afford, can successfully make their way in the world, and, there are some who can do it without such aids; but this number, in proportion to the whole, is extremely small. As a class, the blind are inferior to normal persons; and this inferiority is, doubtless, owing to a constitutional defect, implicating both the muscular system and those organs through which all mental manifestations are made, and of which blindness is but the external evidence.

It is indeed humiliating to be driven to the confession of this inferiority; but, as human deterioration is directly the result of the negligence of society to perform its highest duty to its members, whatever odium may attach to such deterioration, must fasten on society, and not upon those who are the victims of its blunders, and its sins.

From such information as I have been able to gather from other sources, and from personal observation, I am constrained to the adoption of the opinion that a very large proportion of the blind will never be able successfully to cope with the fierce and increasing competition existing in every pursuit in which they can engage; but experience is equally conclusive concerning the ability of the feeblest and most helpless among them to make encouraging approaches towards self-support.

For six or seven years past there has existed in Boston, in connection with the School for the Blind, a shop, in which blind persons have been employed in the various departments of upholstery, in seating cane-bottom chairs, and in the manufacture of several kinds of door-mats. These persons have been boarded

at the expense of the institution, and paid in cash much lower wages than those ordinarily paid to seeing workmen engaged in similar handicrafts, the difference being designed to meet the expense of board, lodging, &c. Some of the workmen and work-women in this shop have earned their living and something more, whilst others have fallen short of so doing. They have not been constantly supplied with work, and of course the earnings of each have been much less than they would have been if uninterrupted employment had been furnished; nevertheless, the amount of work done, and the sales of manufactured articles have annually increased, and the establishment is now doing well. A similar experiment is now making in New York. These industrial establishments, though having existed but a short time, and having thus far accomplished comparatively little, do, nevertheless, furnish certain and reliable data, upon which to rest accurate and encouraging conclusions.

Experience has shown that most blind persons who are qualified to act as teachers of music, or teachers in other departments, or who possess sufficient capital to establish themselves in business, can successfully make their way in the world; but experience is equally clear upon the fact that all who are not thus qualified, or who do not possess this capital, cannot. It then becomes a matter of some importance to decide what further action shall society take in reference to these—what further aid shall be afforded them, and in what manner such aid shall be bestowed. The experiments made in other States would seem to point out the answer. Let every State, after having educated its blind, build a shop, and furnish it with the necessary tools and materials, and employ in it all such blind persons as may be qualified to work at the various branches therein carried on. There might also be, in connection with this establishment, a manual labor school, into which such persons that might be too old to enter the institution designed for the training of the young blind, could be admitted and taught to work at any trade which they had sufficient mechanical capacity to learn. Now, suppose that such a shop as this should contain fifty persons; twenty of them, in all probability, would earn their living and something beside; twenty others would produce exactly as much as they consume, and the remaining ten would earn less than the cost of their living; this deficiency might, however, be provided for out of the profit of the sales of manufactured articles; if no such profit existed, it might be supplied by a small expenditure from the public treasury. It is clear that such an establishment as this would be as much superior to an alms-house, as productive industry is to consumptive indolence; and by all the difference between production and consumption, society would be the gainer. And, inasmuch as the intellectual and moral well-being of its members constitutes the highest wealth of society, it would further be the gainer by all the difference between wretchedness and uselessness, and happiness and usefulness.

It is a sound maxim of political economy, that the wealth of a community depends upon the amount of its production; but it is clear that this amount must again depend upon the number of productive members in the community, and the extent to which each produces. Now, any amount of production, however small, is better than none; and it is very evident that any agent that will convert a non-productive consumer into a producer, multiplies the products of the community; and to whatever extent such multiplication proceeds, to that extent society is enriched; and the establishment that has been mentioned is precisely such an agent.

The limits prescribed to this report, forbid that more should be said upon this subject.

In order that a State may understand its true position, it is necessary that the statistics of calamity should be as accurately ascertained, as the statistics of prosperity. And if it be important to know the number of men in a State of able body and stalwart limbs, it is surely no less so to know the number of feeble and infirm. The existing law, I believe, provides that those who take the census, shall, in those districts assigned to them, ascertain the number of blind, deaf and dumb, and other unfortunate persons; but the returns have so frequently been found inaccurate that it is certain the enquiry has usually been loosely conducted. I would therefore recommend that an attempt be made to secure the passage of a law making it the duty of the assessor, or other proper officer, of each county, to ascertain the number of blind in his county, and to send the address of each such person as may be eligible as a pupil of this Institution, to the office of Secretary of State. I would further recommend that strenuous exertions be made to secure the passage of an act supplementary to the existing law, providing that after ten pupils shall have been received, to be supported out of existing appropriations, that for every additional pupil thereafter, the board shall have a right to draw two hundred dollars from the Treasury of the State. Such a law would allow the Institution to enlarge, and render further legislation, for a considerable time, unnecessary. It need scarcely be added, that institutions for the blind, deaf and dumb, and insane, furnish the highest evidence of a true civilization, and are proofs of the progress of society, and cheering and healthy signs of the times. The establishment of such institutions may fairly be regarded as foretokening that universal mantling of the earth with righteousness and peace, of which bards, divinely moved, have sung, and prophets, in their most fervid strains, foretold.

P. LANE.